mobile Measuring Broadband America Tip Sheet

Description and Purpose

Q: What is mobile Measuring Broadband America all about?

A: The FCC Measuring Broadband America Program's mobile measurement effort is a collaborative, crowdsourcing initiative to gather anonymous data from the smartphones of thousands of volunteers in order to assess broadband performance nationwide. Developed in cooperation with SamKnows Ltd., major wireless service providers and diverse stakeholders, the program uses smartphone-based technology to collect anonymized broadband performance data in an open and transparent manner, with the highest commitment to protecting participants' privacy. Data collected is used to provide consumers and policymakers with perspective on mobile broadband service performance across the nation. Information is made freely available to all, subject to various protections to guard the privacy of participants.

Q: What is the FCC mobile app called?

A: The FCC Speed Test.

Q: Aren't there other speed tests already available?

A: The FCC Speed Test mobile application is a part of a campaign to provide the American people with free, open and transparent information on the status of mobile broadband performance across the United States. Other speed tests may not disclose their collection methods publicly or may impose fees for broad access to their collected data. In addition, the FCC Speed Test app collects data automatically to ensure data is statistically valid, providing perspective on typical wireless service performance.

Q: Why scheduled tests?

A: A common problem speed tests face is that measurements are often done either to benchmark performance during ideal conditions or to diagnose problems when the network is likely impaired. Randomized background scheduling is a more statistically valid approach to data collection, providing a more-accurate view of typical network performance. (You can disable scheduled background tests if they interfere with device performance.)

Q: Why should I join?

A: This is a crowdsourcing effort. We need volunteers to participate so that measurements across the entire country can gather enough data to provide valid and accurate results. The data will inform consumers and industry and may lead to better mobile broadband performance for the nation. You also get a handy app to measure what kind of broadband

performance you are getting on your own mobile device. Through your efforts and those of other volunteers, the American public gets an accurate, open view of mobile broadband performance.

Q: Is this open source? Can I see the code?

A: Yes. The FCC is committed to an open, transparent measurement program that protects consumer privacy. The program has been developed in an open process with industry, academia and representatives from other U.S. government agencies. We have published the methodologies being used and made the underlying data available. Open source software encourages use of standard metrics for mobile measurements, reflecting our commitment to transparency. Check out the code at https://github.com/FCC/mobile-mba-androidapp.

Privacy

Q: What personal data is collected?

A: The FCC has taken significant measures to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of volunteers for this program. No personally-identifiable information is collected. Using privacy measures developed and reviewed by the FTC and academic researchers, any data that could potentially identify specific smartphones is cleansed. Before data is made available to the public, the data is thoroughly analyzed and processed to ensure that subscribers' privacy interests are protected. The FCC is committed to ensuring that only network data is collected, and major participants in the program have committed to the privacy policies and have signed a code of conduct (http://www.fcc.gov/measuring-broadband-america/mobile/code-of-conduct.html).

Q: So what information do you collect?

A: Data related to the radio characteristics of the handset, information about the handset type and operating system version, the GPS coordinates available from the handset at the time each test is run, the date and time of the observation, and the results of active test are recorded on the handset. The files are transmitted to storage servers at periodic intervals after the completion of active test measurements.

How to Download and Install the App

Q: Where can I get the application?

A: Visit the Google Play store and search "FCC Speed Test."

Q: Can I install on my iPhone?

A: The application is currently available for Android smartphones; an iPhone version will be available soon.

Q: What kind of devices can I use to run this application?

A: The application is designed to run on smartphone and other Android devices to measure your mobile broadband (cellular) and Wi-Fi performance while connected in the United States. If you have Internet connectivity on your device from a U.S. mobile broadband provider or Wi-Fi connection, the application is designed to measure it.

Q: Do I need to pay?

A: While the application itself is free, data transmitted by the app will be counted as part of a consumer's overall data usage and counted against any data usage limits of the consumer's service plan. To ensure that the amount of data usage incurred by the app is minimal, the app will not run after a monthly data usage threshold is reached.   We have set this to a default value of 100 Mbytes, which is a small fraction of many typical plans. This value is changeable by the end user from within the app itself. We recommend you set this at a value both appropriate to any actual data cap governing your service plan and your desire to help support this effort.

Usage

Q: What is the activation process?

A: The app downloads a configuration file to schedule tests.

Q: The app says it needs to be activated. How do I do that?

A: Go to menu and select "Activation."

Q: When will data be publicly available?

A: We expect to launch a website in early 2014 that will display results of the program. Data will also be available for download.

Q: How do I run the tests?

A: Select "Run now."

Q: Can I do only one of the several tests?

A: Select the down arrow next to "Run now" and a pop-up menu will allow you to choose a specific test to perform.

Q: How can I limit the data used so I don't exceed my data plan?

A: Go to the settings and select "Mobile Data Cap" to choose how much data the app can use.

Q: I don't want the app to run any background tests. How do I disable them?

A: Go to the settings and uncheck "Enable Testing." Please keep in mind that the program's success is highly dependent on the background tests to provide the public with the most-complete information about the performance of nation's mobile broadband infrastructure.

Q: I'm a power user who wants the absolute best battery life possible. What can I do?

A: You can change the type of location service the app uses. Select "Mobile Network" to use less battery power.

Results from Your Device

Q: How do I see specific results for my device?

A: Select the down arrow next to "Download," "Upload," "Latency," or "Packet Loss." You will see a graph of your tests and a grid of your latest test results.

Q: How do I see the details of a specific test?

A: If you want to see the details of a specific test result, swipe to the left and the details of the most recent test will appear. Continue to swipe left to see tests further back in time.

Q: How do I see averages for more than one week?

A: Select the arrow next to "Results for 1 Week." A menu will let you choose different time periods.

Technical Support and Feedback

Q: I'm having difficulty, how can I get technical support?

A: For tech support for the app, please contact [INSERT EMAIL ADDRESS HERE].

Q: How can I share feedback about the app?

A: Your feedback is welcome and encouraged. Please send it to feedback-mba@fcc.gov.